

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINSHA 00572 211559Z
ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1381
INFO AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 0572

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SK, BY, RW
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR ROK RELATIONSHIPS WITH BURUNDI

REF: (A) BUJUMBURA 0059; (B) SEOUL 458; (C) STATE 12912

1. EMBASSY BUJUMBURA'S ASSESSMENT CONTAINED REF (A) IS RIGHT ON. WHILE I HEARTILY AGREE IN PRINCIPLE THAT ROK'S SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO RUN THEIR OWN POLICIES IN AFRICA WITH MINIMAL ADVICE FROM US, THEY ARE NOT GOING TO GET VERY FAR WITH THE KIND OF APPROACH OUTLINED REF (B). UNLESS THEY ARE WILLING TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVIST ROLE IN PURSUIT OF THEIR INTERESTS, WHICH INEVITABLY REQUIRES TAKING SOME CALCULATED RISKS, THEY MUST BE PREPARED TO CONCEDE POINTS TO THEIR COMPETITORS.

2. I SUPPOSE THE ROKG VIEWS ZAIRE AS AN EXAMPLE OF A COUNTRY WHICH HAS QUALIFIED ITSELF FOR SOME ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. AND YET, IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN A YEAR SINCE THE NORTH KOREANS WERE SENT PACKING AFTER BUNGLING A MAJOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE EFFORT; AND SIX MONTHS SINCE THE GOZ (FOLLOWING DEMARCHES BY BOTH THE US
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PAGE 02 KINSHA 00572 211559Z

AND ROKG) STOOD UP AT COLOMBO TO ARGUE FOR A TRULY NON-ALIGNED KOREAN RESOLUTION. DURING ALL THIS TIME THE ROK'S, FAR FROM AGGRESSIVELY EXPLOITING A FAVORABLE POLITICAL OPENING, HAVE BEEN PONDERING WHETHER OR NOT TO PUT A HANDFUL OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL INTO KISANGANI'S HOSPITAL. NOT ONLY DOES THIS KIND OF LETHARGIC RESPONSE RISK MISSING A READY-MADE OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITION IN ZAIRE; BUT IT CAN HARDLY SERVE TO ENCOURAGE

SUCH NEIGHBORS AS BURUNDI TO BE VERY RECEPTIVE TO ROK OVERTURES.

3. AS FOR REF (C), WE DO NOT KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT BURUNDI AMBASSADOR
HERE TO ADVISE WHETHER DIALOGUE WOULD BE FEASIBLE. EMBASSY
BUJUMBURA MAY BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO JUDGE. IT IS CONCEIVABLE
THAT GOZ, WHICH CLAIMS TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH NEW BAGAZA
REGIME, WOULD BE AMENABLE TO HELPING OUT IN SOME LOW-KEY WAY.
BUT, AGAIN, THEIR WILLINGNESS TO DO SO CAN HARDLY BE ENHANCED
BY WHAT LITTLE THEY HAVE SEEN OF ROK EFFORTS IN ZAIRE DURING THE
PAST YEAR.
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